REL 3931: JUNIOR SEMINAR
TUESDAY, PERIODS 3-4 & THURSDAY, PERIOD 4
FLI 115/AND 32
FALL 2012

Instructor: Dr. Manuel A. Vásquez
Office: Anderson 107B        Tel. 352-273-2945        E-mail: manuelv@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays Noon- 2PM and Wednesday 11:30AM – 1:30PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to some of the key theories and methodologies in the study of religion via the “classics.” We will begin with a discussion of the term “religion,” reconstructing its origin and historical development as well as assessing its viability as a descriptive and analytical category. The course then explores classical approaches to religion in the humanities and social sciences, particularly in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and history. We conclude the course by exploring the prospects for the comparative study of religion in the context of postmodernism and globalization.

OBJECTIVES

1. To make students conversant with the theories and methods developed by the seminal figures in the discipline of religion (e.g., Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Freud, Jung, Eliade, and Geertz).

2. To develop students’ capacity to identify and evaluate critically the underlying assumptions of theories of religion. More specifically, the course seeks to help students develop a rigorous and reflexive stance when studying religion.

3. To use the small seminar setting to sharpen students’ expository writing skills as well as their ability to articulate and defend their own analytical perspectives.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Three Take-Home Exams. Each of these exams will ask students to define key terms and answer two essay questions addressing issues raised in the readings, class discussions, and lectures. Since students will have at least a week to complete these assignments, I expect all essays to be well-developed, with good grammar, spelling, and syntax. I place a premium on analytical thinking. Students will need to demonstrate that they have engaged the various theories and can articulate concepts, arguments, and methodologies in their own words. The first, second, and third exams will address specific sections of the course. Exam I and II will each be worth 25% of your final grade. The third and final take-home exam is cumulative and is worth 35% of the final grade.

2. Attendance, Active Participation, and Quizzes: Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually and to participate actively in class discussion. Absences will be allowed only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency. In that case, students must bring a doctor’s note. Active and informed participation demands that students read the material carefully before coming to class. The instructor reserves the right to give quizzes at any time during the course. In most circumstances, students will not be allowed to make up missed quizzes. Attendance, participation, and quizzes represent 15% of your final grade.
RULES

1. **Plagiarism or cheating**: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. On the issue of plagiarism and cheating, I operate under a zero tolerance policy. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm) for more information on UF policies.

2. **Incompletes are strongly discouraged** and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

3. **Make-up quizzes and exams** will only be given to students who can present proper, legitimate written documentation (in the form of a medical excuse or a funeral notice, for example) to justify their inability to take a quiz or an exam during the scheduled time.

4. **Grading Scale**: A: 100-95; A-: 94-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-84; B-: 83-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-74; C-: 73-70; D+: 69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E: <60.

5. Given that religion is often a very personal and potentially contentious topic, I **expect students to treat each other with civility and respect**. I hope that our debates will be lively and that people will feel free to express their opinions and disagree with each other. However, these opinions and disagreements have to be presented in a manner that is appropriate to an academic setting.

6. Students engaging in any sort of disruptive behavior, including passing notes, reading a newspaper, playing computers games, checking their e-mail, or chatting while lectures and class discussions are taking place, will be asked to leave the classroom. They will be counted as absent for that particular day. **Please turn phones and pagers off during class.**

7. **Please make sure to arrive to class on time**. I dislike being interrupted once class has started.

8. **Students with Disabilities**. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.

REQUIRED READINGS

*Books*


*Other Additional Readings* (available through e-learning -- Sakia)


**SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**Part I: Introductory Matters**

Thurs. 08/23: General Introduction to the Course: No Readings
Tues. 08/28:  What is Religion?
Readings: Nye, “Chapter 1: Religion, Some Basics” (*)

Thurs. 08/30:  The Founding Fathers I: E. B. Tylor, Animism and Animatism
Readings: Pals, pp. 1-35

Tues. 09/04:  The Founding Fathers II: James Frazer, Magic, and Religion
Readings: Pals, pp. 37-70

Part II: Sociologies of Religion

Thurs. 09/06:  Durkheim I: The Sacred and the Profane
Readings: Pals, pp. 99-109

Tues. 09/11:  Durkheim II: Totemism and Religion as Social Cement
Readings: Pals, pp. 110-125
Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” in the additional readings

Thurs. 09/13:  Durkheim III: Anomie and Secularization
Readings: Pals, pp. 125-142
O’Dea and Poblete, “Anomie and the Quest for Community,” in additional readings

Tues. 09/18:  Marx and Marxism I: Religion as Ideology
Readings: Pals, pp. 143-170

Thurs. 09/20:  Marx and Marxism II: Religion, Hegemony, and Counter-Hegemony
Readings: E. P. Thompson, “The Transforming Power of the Cross,” in the additional readings

Tues. 09/25:  Weber I: The Reformation and Luther’s Notion of Calling
Readings: Weber, The Protestant Ethic, Author’s Introduction and Part I

Thurs. 09/27:  Weber II: The Puritans and This-Worldly Asceticism
Readings: Weber, The Protestant Ethic, Part II, Section IV

Tues. 10/02:  Weber III: Christianity, Rationalization, and Capitalism
Readings: Weber, The Protestant Ethic, Part II, Section V
Rosin, “Did Christianity Cause the Crash?” in additional readings

Thurs. 10/04:  Weber IV: Toward a Comparative Sociology of World Religions
Readings: Pals, pp. 255-270

*** FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON 10/08 AT 4 PM ***

Part III. Psychologies of Religion

Tues. 10/09:  Freud I: Religion and the Super-Ego
Readings: Pals, pp. 71-89
Thurs. 10/11: Freud II: Religion as the Neurosis of the Century  
Readings: Pals, pp. 89-97

Tues. 10/16: Beyond Freud? Carl Jung: Religion and Self-Individuation  
Readings: Jung, “Sigmund Freud,” pp. 146-169, in additional readings

Thurs. 10/18: Beyond Freud? Rudolf Otto and William James  
Readings: Pals, pp. 171-235

Part IV: History of Religions

Tues. 10/23: Eliade I: Hierophanies, Archetypes, and Sacred Space  
Readings: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Introduction and Chapter I  
Carrasco, “Mesoamerica as a New World,” in additional readings  
Eck, “The City as a Sacred Center,” in additional readings

Thurs. 10/25: Eliade II: Sacred Time and the Myth of Eternal Return  
Readings: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Introduction and Chapter II; Pals, pp. 297-308

Tues. 10/30: Eliade III: Religion and Nature  
Readings: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Introduction and Chapters III and IV;  
Pals, pp. 287-297

Thurs. 11/01: Eliade IV: Critiques  

*** SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON 11/05 AT 4 PM ***

Part V: Anthropologies of Religion

Tues. 11/06: Geertz I: Religion as a Cultural System  
Readings: Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” pp. 87-125, in additional readings

Thurs. 11/08: Geertz II: Critiques  
Reading: Asad, “The Construction of Religion,” pp. 27-54, in additional readings

Part VI: Some Current Debates

Tues. 11/13: Religion and the Challenge of Postmodernism  
Readings: A Magic Still Dwells, pp. 1-74

Thurs. 11/15: Religion in the Postmodern Age: Is Comparison Still Viable?  

Tues. 11/20: Meeting of the American Academy of Religion – Class Cancelled
Thurs. 11/22:  Thanksgiving Break – Class Cancelled

Tues 11/27:   Religion in the Postmodern Age II: Transnational Religions
Readings: Vásquez and Marquardt, “Saving Souls Transnationally,” pp. 119-144, in
additional readings

Thurs. 11/29:  Religion in the Postmodern Age III: Religion in Cyberspace
Readings: Scheifinger, “Jagannath Temple and Online Darshan,” in additional readings

Tues. 12/04:  The Lived Religion Approach
Readings: Orsi, “Everyday Miracles” and “He Keeps me Going,” in additional
readings

*** THIRD TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE ON FRIDAY 12/14 AT 4 PM ***